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Ethnographic Notes on the Fan Tribes of the Middle Ogooué (Gabon)
(Notes Ethnographiques sur les Tribus Fan du Moyen Ogooué [Gabon])

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ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES
on
THE FAN TRIBES OF THE MIDDLE OGOOUE (GABON)

by
Édouard Trézenem

Notice

121 The notes which we present here do not aim to be a monograph on the entire Fan [Fang] nation but only a purely objective description of the present life of the Fan tribes which inhabit the Ogooué region. This description, moreover, does not pretend to be without gaps.

121 On many points, particularly regarding the religious life, the cus-
194 toms of these tribes may appear to be quite different from those described by the authors who have spoken about the Fan and even about those tribes which live farther inland, towards the lands of the Woleu-N'tem or of the Ivindo [River]. In the Ogooué [area], these differences seem to be due to continued contact with Europeans, to the influence of Christian missions which have a catechist in each village, and to the expansion of relations with neighboring peoples.

We will not discuss these in principle, nor will we attempt to follow the progressive evolution of the tribes, having in mind only a work of documentation.

The Country and Its Inhabitants

[131] The region where we began our inquiry is situated below the
133 equator, in Gabon, in the [area of the] middle Ogooué. In this, a
137 land largely of forests, one finds in the west, on the banks of the river and its tributaries (the Abanga at the right, the Mboumi at the left) low, heavily forested areas, flooded in the rainy season, from which arise a few narrow ridges [66], some dozen meters in height at the most, where villages have been established. Many marshes, and lakes

133 full of fish, hold water during the worst of the dry season.

137 In going up the Ogooué one meets, a little before the island of Talagouga, the first spurs of the north-south oriented African plateau, still low (N'Djolé has an altitude of 63 meters), the elevation of which increases rapidly as one goes towards the interior. Upstream from N'Djolé, the Ogooué ceases to be navigable. Broken by rapids, it is no longer passable except for specially equipped dugout canoes. About a dozen kilometers beyond the influx of the Okano, the aspect of the country changes: the large forest gives way to great stretches of prairie dotted with wooded groves, on the hillsides formations of quartz blocks are seen and oil palms, which were not present downstream, begin to appear. Mt. Otoumbi dominates the landscape from its 700 meters, and the rounded hillsides of the ranges bordering the river recall some features of the Vosges.

133 In the N'Djolé region, the Ogooué receives as its chief tributaries: to the right, the Bingola, Okano, and Abanga; to the left, shorter rivers of less volume, the Leledi, Lebe, and Mbumi. Only Abanga is navigable, and this for only about 70 kilometers.

132 The climate is hot and humid, with alternating dry and rainy seasons: from October to January, the rainy season; from January to March, a very hot, dry season, the ripening time of almost all the forest fruits; from March to June, again violent rains; great tornadoes, and severe heat; and from June to October, a comparatively cool, dry season, with cessation of growth for some varieties of forest vegetation. At this time the waters are very low; sand banks can be seen everywhere in the Ogooué some of whose tributaries, like the Misanga, have only a trickle of water. The seasons are obviously not as strictly demarcated as this, and one season often encroaches on the other.

101 Today this whole region is almost entirely inhabited by the Fan who, since their arrival, probably at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 563 have either driven out or decimated the [other] inhabitants, the Okata and Bapinji [Bapindji] up the N'Djolé (of the Okata there is now only one village left, and the Bapinji have completely disappeared) and the Bakele [Bakale, Bakelle (?)] downstream. The latter still have some villages in the interior on the left bank, but only one on the edge of the river.

101 Fan is the name they give themselves. Pahouin [Pahuin] is the one by which they are commonly known and which, according to Haug (1)

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[Geographic and Ethnographic Comment
on the Lower Ogooué], Ann. de Géogr.,
No. 62, March 15, 1903.

" is a [67] corruption of the word mpanwe by which the tribes of the coast refer to the Fan." Among them are found the tribes of three great parent branches, the Betsi and the Nzaman of the Madzouna dialect, and the Make of the Maekina dialect. Their number has a strong tendency to decrease due to continuous migration towards the sea, and above all due to lack of births and to stillbirths. There are actually no villages except on the banks of the Ogooué and the Abanga, and in the valley of the Okano along the route that joins the river at Oyem; and a few hamlets of the Make in the interior near small Bakele settlements on the left bank. The whole region of the right bank is depopulated, and one finds no more than frequent patches of short, thick brush without trees, except for some banana trees which are traces of vanished former villages.

Beliefs

173 I. Concerning the origin of man, the elements. Whenever a
[1867] Pahouin recites his genealogy (every child is used to this from his early years, a survival of the need while traveling to make oneself known as a member of a tribe), he ends the list of his ancestors with: "X... son of Nzame," and adds a formula meaning "and the rooster crowed and I was not there." All the Pahouin now living thus claim a common ancestor, Nzame, to whom they attribute supernatural powers but whom they do not worship. This Nzame himself has four known ancestors: Meboere, Nkwa, Sokuma, and Mba Angwe. We have not been able to obtain any information about these, nor about the formula in which the rooster is mentioned [sic]. It seems that this is due to the ignorance of the natives rather than their ill will (many traditions were lost through contact with peoples met in the westward migration and especially through contact with Europeans), since the natives questioned quite voluntarily gave accounts of the life of Nzame as their fathers had described it to them.

173 In the past Nzame lived a life which his children still live today,
773 proceeding westward as he abandoned villages in which he had lived
with his wives and which he vacated after the fields had been ex-
hausted. The number of his wives was so great that it was not known,
and his villages were so important that at their sites the forest could
not grow back, and this is why there are now plains in the midst of the
forest in the Pahouin country.

Nzame arrived at the end of the earth, which is flat, and came up
against the sky barring his way, an iron roof covering the earth as a
roof covers a hut, and held up at its center by an invisible stake which
[68] has since been held up by Ningone Maboere, sister of Nzame.
He went to the other side of the sky after having crossed a very wide
river, Endam, into which all the rivers empty and which flows all
around the earth and under it, bursting through at the thinnest points so
as to emerge in the form of springs. Then Nzame stopped and estab-
lished the village Dzo, which he has not left since.

It is in this village that Nzame still lives with his wives and chil-
dren. His life is the same as on earth, and there he welcomes the dead
and keeps the elements imprisoned, the sun, moon, rain, etc...

773 Every morning, when Okwal the wild fowl calls, Nzame goes to
821 open the door of the hut where the sun sleeps. The sun wakes up, gets
on its way, goes around the sky, and returns in the evening when every-
one is in bed, to rest in the hut which it left in the morning. "The sun
is a large ball of fire which gives heat and light as it burns.

The moon also is imprisoned in the village Dzo. It is a large white
stone which Nzame regularly shows to the people at night in different
phases: small, larger, entirely round, then smaller and smaller, until
he hides it for a few days. Because of its whiteness, the moon also
gives light.

The rainbow is a big snake which is seen when Nzame gives it per-
mission to go out and drink water from the river.

Sometimes Nzame also opens the door of another hut, and rain
comes out, preceded by wind. Rain falls through holes pierced in the
sky, which allow the lights of the Dzo village, or the shining eyes of
the dead which look at the earth, to be seen at night. These luminous
holes are the stars. Sometimes lightning comes out of the hut at the
same time as the rain. The former is a little animal that falls on the
trees and breaks them, making a noise. In the dry season the rain goes
back to the hut, and it is seen at night or in the morning in the form
of great white mists rising above the lakes and rivers.

773 Nzame has much work in his village, but he does not disdain to en-
 821 joy himself. He causes tomtom dances to be performed on the sky,
 and the noise of the dancers' feet is called thunder. From time to
 time also, when there is an eclipse, it is Nzame who takes pleasure
 in frightening people by plunging them into darkness at midday.

776 II. The evur. The evur or evus (plural, bivur) appears to be an
 individual spirit which plays a fundamental role in the life of the
 Pahouin. Not all persons have an evur. To have an evur, one must
 have received it from a person who has one. Such a person is called
nem (plural, beyem). A child in the foetal state carried by its mother
 [69] can receive an evur even without the knowledge of the mother.
 One can tell by its weight that a newborn has an evur; only a nem,
 on lifting a child in his arms, can say that he has felt the weight of
 the evur, imperceptible to anyone else.

776 If at its birth a child has no evur, it can then receive one. The
 852 evur given it is either good (evur mve) or evil (evur abi).

(1) Good evur. In the case of a good evur, the donor of this evur,
 who is always an elder of the tribe, comes often to see the child until
 [86] the latter can count to ten, that is to say, at about seven or eight years
 of age. At this time the child is considered intelligent enough to
 understand what is expected of him, and then the ceremony called
akaga is performed.

[824] All the beyem of the village are invited to meet at a tree called
ovah (*Didelotia africana*), chosen from among all the others as the
 fetish tree because of its size, its longevity, and its resistance to
 tornadoes. The child is brought there; then the donor of the evur, in
 the presence of the assembled beyem, pronounces the wishes which he
 makes for the child's future. He wishes him wealth, strength, success,
 in general all that which will make him happy. For little girls the
 wishes are more particularly that they may later have many children,
 that they may be strong for their planting tasks, and that they may be
 esteemed by the other wives of their future husbands.

A kind of soup called nam akaga, the preparation of which is
 secret, is made on the occasion of this ceremony. Each time the
 donor of the evur makes a wish, the child must take a little nam.
 For example, if the wish is for him to have ten wives, this is made
 with the following words:

e mon ni, nam ma ke we wi olug bunega awum

That child, the soup I give you here marries ten wives,

776 and he must take ten spoonfuls of soup. Similarly, he will eat a
852 spoonful for each child wished for. As to the other wishes, wealth,
strength, courage, esteem, etc., these necessitate eating all that is
left in the pot. This large quantity of soup signifies that the wish
made is for an immeasurable amount of whatever is desired.

776 The night following the ceremony of akaga, the bivur of the beyem
who have been present leave the bodies of their possessors in order to
hold an invisible meeting called ngwel. This is the only time that the
ngwel does not have a completely malevolent action, since otherwise
the bivur never meet except to do evil. The ngwel which follows the
akaga confirms the wishes made for the child and promises to protect
his evur until it is strong enough; in fact, the evur grows with the child
and does not reach its full vitality until the child is an adult. The
ngwel [70] also shows the new member what part of the body he must
remove from the person he will later sacrifice, in order to make a
fetish. This sacrifice is made in gratitude to the bivur who concerned
themselves with him during the akaga.

776 Every time an evur leaves the body for a ngwel, it is injured and
784 fatigued, and can only be restored with human blood. After the
ngwel, which follows the akaga, the bivur who have taken part in this
weakened state and, when they have finished attending to the wishes
made for the child, they ask the evur of the person who invited them to
point out the victim they must eat for their recovery. An old man of
the paternal or maternal family is usually designated for this purpose.
Lacking such a person, the nem who bestowed the evur may sacrifice
himself. If he does not consent, the assembled bivur place a prohibi-
tion (eki) on the child. For example, if ten wives have been wishes for
him, he is forbidden on pain of death to take an eleventh; or else he is
forbidden, always on pain of death, to eat certain foods or to do, or
allow such and such a thing to be done. When the prohibition is of
little importance, death in case of infraction may be replaced by the
good evur transforming into an evil one.

Respect for the prohibitions and faith in their power is so firmly
fixed in the minds of all the Pahouins that one who violated a
prohibition of akaga is sure to die, and without external intervention.

784 A Protestant missionary of the Samkita station cited to us the case
158 of a twelve-year-old child, a boarding pupil of the mission, who was

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158 forbidden by akaga to eat manioc. He had never eaten any and had lived on bananas. One evening he cooked his bananas in a pot which had been used by other pupils, without having taken the precaution of washing it. During the night he learned that before he had used it, manioc had been cooked in it. Thinking that his bananas might thus have been contaminated by the remains of manioc caught on the edges of the pot and that he had broken his eki, he died in a few hours with horrible suffering, as none of the cares lavished on him was able to alleviate his condition. It is to be noted that none of the children who had eaten the manioc cooked in the pot was ill, and that the one who died was in excellent health up to the moment when he learned that he had broken his eki.

The same missionary also cited to us the case of a woman of the Ngone village, near the station, who had as eki not to be hit on the back. A district guard supervising the work of brush clearance in the village and seeing that she was not working hard enough, gave her a very light tap on the shoulder blade. Immediately the woman started rolling on the ground. She was carried in terror to the mission, eyes rolling, foam at the mouth, muscles contracted, and unable to utter [71] a sound. The missionary, believing this to be an epileptic seizure, tried in vain by every possible means to quiet her. Later when he had heard the story and learned that he was in the presence of a Protestant Christian woman, he explained to her that since she was a Christian the bivur could no longer have power over her, and in any case, if she believed them to be strong enough to make her die, she would not fail to go to hell after death. Was this fear of hell stronger than the ancestral one of the bivur? After long religious exhortations by the missionary, the woman returned to her normal condition.

776 In order to avoid the eki, the child may give a part of his body to the bivur. At the place where the removal has been performed -- invisible because performed by spirits -- an incurable wound is incurred. But usually, if it is a boy, he gives his testicles to the bivur, who take them and eat them. Only their image remains on the child, and it is this image which everyone takes for reality. In this case the bivur predict for him an accumulation of wealth when this image of the testicles swells.

When the child for whom the bivur worked in the ngwel after the akaga has become a man, and some of the wishes that were made have

776 been realized, he rewards these bivur by giving them a member of his family: father, mother, brother, first wife, first child, or maternal uncle.

776 The person eaten by the bivur dies, and the beneficiary of the akaga
778 must take a portion of the body and keep it all his life. This will be a protecting fetish.

For example, a man has offered his father. When the corpse has rotted in the grave, he goes and extracts a tooth and gives it to the beyem who, at the time of the akaga, had told him to take it. These beyem, or at least those who have not died by this time, meet again under the ovah where they cause an evur to dwell in the tooth and order it to make all its guardian's wishes come true. The wishes made at the time of the akaga are renewed, this time in the form of an order to the evur which takes its place in the tooth. The latter is then given back to its owner who, in order to hide it, swallows it or keeps it enclosed in a box carefully hidden in his hut so that no one sees it, not even his wives or children. Before accomplishing anything at all, he must first speak to the tooth, invoking the evur so that it will come to his aid.

If it is the first wife who has been given to the bivur, the husband removes a piece of frontal bone from the corpse, which receives an evur in the same way as the tooth described above. This bone is placed in a box full of oil, and every time the owner of the fetish appeals to this evur he must anoint his face with the oil in which the bone is soaked. [72]

Sometimes instead of a tooth or a bone, flesh is removed. The removal is then made in the night following the burial. The beyem dry the piece of flesh and incorporate an evur in it. In order to invoke this evur the owner of the fetish must put the piece of dried flesh in his mouth.

The possessor of an evur is forbidden to have any other fetish than that prescribed for him by the akaga.

776 (2) Evil evur. The evil evur, like the good, is given at the moment of birth. It may also come from an evur given the child in its mother's womb with which the nem donor does not concern himself at birth, or from a good evur whose owner has broken a prohibition of the akaga.

There is no akaga for an evil evur.

776 The evil evur concerns itself only with eating people in the course of the ngwel and with waging war against the good bivur. It is almost always the evil evur which is the victor.

(3) Activities of the evur. The manifestations of the evur are many, and it is the evur which acts in everything instead of, and in place of, its owner.

It is essential for one who wishes to be a practitioner to have an evur. Moreover, this profession is assigned to a child, should the occasion arise, at the time of the ceremony of akağa.

Except in the case of an activity favorable to its owner, or at the time of the akağa, the evur is always malevolent. The only aim of the ngwel meetings is to assure the life of the bivur through the death of the persons whom they eat.

776 When the good evur of a nem has worked in full daylight for its
155 owner, the latter falls ill at the same time as his evur. He can be
834 treated only with a thick medication made of water, a cooked egg, and crushed leaves of ebele beyem. Ebele beyem is the name of a poisonous vine whose leaves and blossoms resemble those of the sweet potato.

776 The malevolent activity of the evur is always manifested in a death.
761 It may also be the cause of abortion, or the death of a newborn the moment it sees daylight.

776 The evur also allows its possessor to change himself into an animal.
762 For example, a man who wishes to die causes his evur to go out and
158 take the form of an animal (usually a black antelope, nzip, or a red antelope, nkog), and to walk at the edge of the village. The animal is noticed at once by the inhabitants who hunt and kill it. The evur then immediately returns to the man who sent it, and it is the man who is killed instead of the animal. The transformation is simultaneous with the blow which causes death, and it is the man, transported by his evur, who is found dead at the spot where the animal fell. [73]

776 An example of this faculty of transformation was reported to us in
158 March, 1934. Two hunters landed on a small island in Lake Manguigne to hunt a monkey which they had seen in a tree. They separated at the landing spot, after having decided that each should go around the island from his side. One of them saw a large black antelope in the thickets, fired, and when he drew near found his comrade riddled with shot, gasping his last and dying shortly afterwards. The inhabitants of the neighboring village, aroused by the cries, arrived in time to hear

776 the victim exonerate the murderer, admitting that what happened
158 was his own fault and that he had changed himself into an antelope so as not to frighten the hunted monkey. Not for an instant did the Pahouin of the district dream of doubting the truth of the story, and each recalled the exploits of the dead man who, thanks to his ability to change himself, had several times lived among gorillas and panthers, whose young he had brought back as proof of his double existence.

In September, 1933, in the village of Ehabara on the Abanga, a woman, Ningone Obarame, told us how her husband, Obiang Abugo, transformed into an elephant, killed her little daughter: One day she saw Obiang come into the hut in the form of a bird, and he asked her to give him the little girl to look after him. Ningone refused. To punish her, Obiang caused her to have an abscess on her breast. A few days after this, she went fishing in a side channel of the river, Obiang staying in camp with the child. Suddenly Ningone felt her head get heavy and her heart beat fast. She was frightened and returned to the camp where she found her husband lying asleep. The little daughter was not there. Ningone went out, called her, and suddenly saw her dead, trampled by Obiang in the shape of an elephant. At this point Obiang, the elephant, promised to give her a boy in place of the little girl. Ningone went back to the camp. Obiang was still lying down and continued to sleep. She waked him up and accused him of the death of her daughter. Obiang did not deny it and said he had to kill her so that his own evur would not die. Nevertheless, he died two or three days afterwards.

Ningone told us this story in the presence of all the inhabitants of the village and numerous listeners from neighboring villages, all of whom considered the incident normal and only discussed the question of whether, because of the crime committed by Obiang's evur, Ningone should, or should not, pay back the dowry to her dead husband's family.

778 (4) Protection against the bivur. In spite of all the acknowledged
776 power of the evur, the Pahouin seek to protect themselves against it.

For this there is an essential fetish called mvul, or byah bivur. Upon the death of a person suspected of having had an evur which fed upon human blood, the abdomen of the corpse is opened and a search is made for the evur. [74] This, it seems, is like a crab; it has a small mouth with little teeth; its claws form long veins that go into every part of the body. Once the evur is found, its belly is opened, and if it

778 has lived on human flesh, a piece of the flesh is found. That piece
776 of flesh is taken out and put into an antelope horn together with
scrapings of a vine called nzi bivur, a panther claw (dze nze), the
talon of an sparrow hawk, and a firefly. The end of the horn is closed
with the wax of white honey (eko abe).

The fetish thus made is either carried by the person who wishes to
protect himself or is hung at the door of the hut. At night, if the bivur
wish to enter the hut, the firefly will leave the horn and fly into the
hut, giving warning of their approach. Then there is a battle (abal
nguel, the war of the ngwel) between the bivur and the horn fetish,
from which the fetish almost always emerges victor.

III. The bieri. The bieri is a family fetish whose help must be
778 sought before every important undertaking: hunting, fishing, a journey,
choice of farm land, etc., by the head of the family who owns the
fetish.

778 It consists of the skull of a dead ancestor taken from the grave by a
824 practitioner after the complete disappearance of the flesh. After having
taken the skull, the practitioner goes into the forest and makes from the
bark of a tree called andun (Berlinia sp.) a cylindrical box with a lid,
big enough to hold the skull. The bottom of the box and the top of the
lid are formed by a circular disc of wood nailed into the bark cylinder
with little pegs of hard wood. The practitioner then cleans the skull
and anoints it with an ointment of red wood sawdust (ba) and oil of
raphia palm. The box is called naeg and the skull sen bieri, the whole
having the name of bieri. Into the box is also placed some red wood
sawdust and a plant called nzen (a kind of fern); and sometimes also a
little wooden bowl. The bieri thus made is put in a hidden place in the
hut of the family head. It will speak in dreams to a family head when-
ever it wishes to notify a member of the family of some event. Some-
times a statuette roughly representing the person whose skull constitutes
the main part of the fetish is put on the lid of the box. It is called nin
bieri (the head of the bieri).

278 No one may see the bieri unless he has eaten some alan (Strychnos
778 icaia) in the course of a ceremony called ku melan. The heads of
778 several families send the future initiates to look for roots of alan, of
which they retain only the bark. Then in the morning each family head
brings his bieri to a place prepared in advance in the bush near the

276 village which is called ngun [75] melan; he carries the bieri on his
 778 shoulder and appears to collapse under its weight. That position is a
 787 manner of worshipping the fetish. When everyone has gathered, ani-
 mals, fowls, or kids are sacrificed; then, to the accompaniment of
 tomtoms, the neophytes dance, sing, and cry out, all the while chew-
 ing pieces of alan prepared the previous day. After a certain time,
 the effect of the root, combined with the excitement of the dances and
 songs, causes most of the participants of the celebration to become
 unconscious after many spasms. This unconsciousness may last two
 or three hours, during which the individuals retain a corpse-like stiff-
 ness. On awakening, each tells the elders what he has seen or what
 the bieri has told him in his dream. One may have been ordered to
 hunt, with the assurance of killing many antelope; another may have
 been warned of the impending death of a member of his family; still
 another may have been told of the imminent pregnancy of a brother's
 wife. All the Pahouin whom we have questioned state that predictions
 made by the bieri to people drunk with alan always come true.

Then the neophytes have the right to look at the bieri, whose boxes
 are open, making a vow not to speak of them to anyone who has not
 undergone the initiation of alan. Every uninitiated person who looks
 at a bieri falls ill, and only the care of a competent practitioner can
 prevent his death.

782 When a family head wants to supplicate his bieri, he sacrifices a
 778 hen, a duck, or a kid, or offers it the hind leg of an animal killed in
 the hunt, and pours blood on the skull. The meat is cooked in leaves
 by a woman, then taken to the bieri with stalks of manioc or a mash
 of bananas and water, by the one making the sacrifice. If, for exam-
 ple, the bieri is appealed to before a hunt, he who makes the sacrifice
 presents the food with these words:

"O tar ta mba bidzi olun wa to we nlem e to ma tune we yū, Binyu
 bon be wa y ozan vag bie betsir" (O father, see the good food, I want
 to dispel the anger that is in your heart. Your children die of want, give
 us meat).

778 Then he goes out of the hut because the bieri will not eat in the
 782 presence of a living being. Several hours later he comes back to look
 787 for the food left by the bieri. Its consumption, however, is not visible
 as it is accomplished immaterially. This food that has been brought
 to the watchers' hut [corps de garde] will be eaten only by the

789 initiates. Anyone else who eats it will become mortally ill. During
 782 the following night, the bieri will reveal to an initiate during his
 787 sleep the means of assuring the success of the hunt for which his help
 has been asked.

788 The bieri strictly forbids anyone, under pain of mortal illness, to
 [76] insult it. Its power is unlimited: it can cause a woman who has
 fled from the village to return to it; it causes lost objects to be found.

In spite of all the faith which the old Pahouin still have in the
bieri, in the region which interests us one may say that the majority of
 the population has abandoned it, primarily because of its being driven
 out by the Christian missions.

515 IV. The buiti. The buiti, which our informants told us were of
 786 Mitsogho [Mitsogo] or Masango [Missanga?] origin (peoples of the
 right bank of the N'Gounié), is a protective association against the
bivur. The information on this secret society was given us by Akam
 Eyene, the head of a buiti, who lived in the village Elong Eko on the
 Abanga. It is rather incomplete because this informant was unwilling
 to give us certain details and to answer numerous questions.

Possessors of bieri band together because of the fear of the bivur,
 against which the bieri by itself is powerless to protect them. Their
 association, the buiti, in its fight against the ngwel, shows itself as
 stronger and kills the bivur (and consequently the individual possessors
 of bivur). It also serves to reveal the beyem, who have evil intentions
 toward members of the buiti and to make their efforts ineffectual.

518 Every member of the buiti brings a piece of his bieri and a piece of
 788 the animal under whose protection he has placed himself. All of these
 are put in a box and constitute the fetish of the association, which also
 keeps such material things as:

515 A musical instrument, ngomi, a harp with eight strings. At the
 534 bottom of the resonance chamber of the one belonging to Akam Eyene
 were pierced three holes covered by three pieces of flesh of chimpanzee,
 gorilla, snake, elephant, eagle, panther, and rooster. This instrument
 accompanies the songs of the ceremony.

A bell, etsoge, a round hollowed-out fruit, into which are put little
 pebbles. It is equipped with a handle and is shaken during the songs.

A branch of raphia palm lying horizontally on two carved stakes
 called minsaga mi buit. The whole thing is called obaka. During the
 ceremonies this branch is beaten with two sticks.

315
184 We have not been able to learn anything about the ceremonies of protection against the bivur. However, Akam Eyene told us that when a member of the buiti has inadvertently eaten the flesh of his protecting animal, which is absolutely forbidden, he holds a meeting called dzimba in the course of which the wrongdoer, after dancing, presents his case. Then the [77] head of the buiti absolves him, spitting scrapings of the bark of the ovah onto his head.

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198 The buiti has a secret language. Akam Eyene gave us only the secret names of certain of its initiates, which correspond to the animals chosen as protectors:

He himself	called <u>ndzikwe</u>	chimpanzee
Ondo Ngema	— <u>ngifabengo</u>	gorilla
Akam Eyene	— <u>asingi</u>	tiger cat
Ngema Eyene	— <u>mitumbu</u>	panther
Bekeka Yebe	— <u>mogabene</u>	elephant
Angwe Nseme	— <u>menyanga</u>	snake
Mba Minkwe	— <u>meyasamba</u>	rooster
Kumeyeme	— <u>mepoku</u>	eagle
Abaga	— <u>ndzobe</u>	wildcat

711 V. Totemism. Despite all questions which we have put to many natives of various tribes, we have not been able to find any signs of totemism. We were only told of instances of individual unions with animals, as in the buiti or following an akaka.

Family and Collective Life

000 In this chapter we will examine the life of the individual in the family and in the social group, from his conception until his death, in incorporating into this framework the family and tribal organization as well as relations with strangers.

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241 Conception (menoh burn). A woman, we have been told by our male and female informants, cannot conceive until after she has menstruated four times. She is, in fact, forbidden to have sexual intercourse before her fourth period. At her first menses, the woman tells her mother or her mother-in-law if she is married (usually her mother-in-law, since there is hardly even a young girl, still with her family, without a husband); the latter henceforth supervises her more

842 meticulously and in due time gives her permission to have relations
833 with her husband. The first relations must take place on the day fol-
841 lowing the end of the menstrual period so that the not yet completely
dried blood in the organs of the woman can mix with the sperm of the
man and make a kind of paste called nsüe a mon (lizard of a child),
which goes back up into the womb of the woman and there develops
[78] and becomes the child. If the woman has relations with a man
before the prescribed time, she will definitely become sterile.

842 Sterility, for which many causes are recognized, can be treated,
except in the case noted above, in case of bad conduct, and in case of
voluntary abortion in the course of a first pregnancy. In order to
847 abort, the woman finds a midwife (ngafi minanga) who sends her out
824 to look for the bark of the afamega vine and the turn tree, which she
crushes and with which she makes an infusion. The woman goes to the
brush and takes four irrigations of this infusion, and that is enough to
induce abortion.

842 On the other hand, the woman who wishes to have children may be
barren for several reasons:

843 (1) She may have aborted naturally and without desiring it. An
842 abortion is recognized as having a natural cause, that is, without
malignant external intervention, in that the patient recovers three or
four days after the accident and without having suffered too much. In
this case the midwife gives the invalid a prohibition called awes which
restrains her from going near any man other than her husband. She may
not say a word to a man except through the mediation of another woman
who acts as interpreter; she may not give anything to a man without
this intermediary, and may not sit where a man has sat; and for this
last reason she always carries a little seat with her. This prohibition
must be observed for two or three months, after which the woman is
again allowed to have relations with her husband. If at the end of
three more months she is still not pregnant, the midwife then gives
her a treatment which consists in having the patient take some soup
(abura) made of pumpkin (ngon) ground on a stone and mixed with herbs
(mia mi nyo, oyah) gathered and chopped by the midwife. These she
cooks with salt and pimento in a pot at the bottom of which has been
placed a copper ring (kon ango), covered by a large leaf during the
cooking.

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If three months after the treatment the woman is still not pregnant, there is nothing to be done and she has to give up having children.

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(2) A woman may be barren after abortion because of her evur. This is recognized in that she aborts with much suffering and then stays ill afterwards for more than eight days. An appeal is made to the practitioner, who renders the evur harmless by making it crazy. After having made the woman take a medicine made of white honey (abe), bark of a cola tree (abel), and bark of abal and atega trees, all mixed with chicken blood, the practitioner goes with her to the ovah where where he customarily conducts his ceremonies, and performs a kind of exorcism which was not revealed to us. Once back in the village, the woman follows the same [79] treatment as in the case of natural abortion.⁶ The secret ceremony performed by the practitioner is called avi evur akur (making the evur crazy).

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(3) Finally, the abortion may have been caused by a male member of the husband's family, the possessor of an evur, who is revealed by the practitioner. If the woman wants to have children, the guilty one must die. He is discovered in the course of a ceremony, part of which is carried out at night and at which the presence of women is forbidden; this is the dance of the bisir. An akuma singer is brought, who recites stories of the tribes of both husband and wife. Before him, covered by a large cloth, lie three or four men who are the bisir. These men have in their hands pointed pieces of bamboo. A young boy of the husband's family is brought there. He passes several times between the singer and the bisir, who prick the boy's legs with the bamboo sticks. The child then goes back into his hut while the songs continue until dawn, the men of the village dancing and clapping their hands in accompaniment to the singer.

In the morning the husband of the aborted woman goes into the forest to find two wooden forks, a limb, and some branches. He plants the two forks in the village square, places the limb on them horizontally, and conceals the forks under the branches; this structure is called nzum. The child who passed before the bisir the previous night is seated on the rail. Before all the assembled men and women of the village, the aborted woman approaches the child and says madzuna, nzum me tela esi ūi, e mur awu makula melum abure (I say, I stay under the nzum so that the man may die who caused me to abort).

842 After this second part of the ceremony, called elum nzum, the
843 child is hidden for eight days in a hut, and women are forbidden to
789 see him during this time; he is now called mvun. On the morning of
the eighth day, the men lay him on a mat in the village square and
cover him with mats and cloths so that the women do not see him; the
inhabitants of the village are again assembled, and the men of the
husband's family step over the mvun one after the other, saying:
madzune, e mvun ebue ni ngi me ki me nga kule abum, me bure (I
say, the mvun is lying there; if it is I who caused the abortion, may
I die). When all the men have passed, the child is taken away. Some
time later the guilty one becomes sick, has a swollen abdomen, and
dies, there being no possibility of caring for him. After his death, the
woman is treated as in the case of natural abortion.

843 Pregnancy (ndzua abum). When a woman is pregnant, she is bound
by numerous obligations and prohibitions which aim to care for the
child which she carries so that she can bring it into the world in good
health. [80]

843 The obligations consist of taking medicines; to prevent the child
757 from having sores in the womb of its mother, she takes an infusion
of the roots of various trees. This medicine is called ese bibolo (to
treat infections); if it is neglected, the child is born with infected
sores which never heal.

The future mother must also go every three days into the brush and
give herself a washing with a preparation of bark of ebom which has
fermented in water. After each enema, water is added to the vessel
containing the pieces of bark, which are kept until the delivery.

That the child may be strong, the pregnant woman anoints her
abdomen with an ointment prepared by the midwife with padouk
powder mixed with raphia oil and bark.

843 Finally, to prevent abortion, the woman wears on her skin, like a
751 belt, a piece of okum vine, which is not removed until after the birth
of the child.

843 All this does not prevent the woman from continuing her work; when
she feels tired, it is because the child is sick, and the midwife treats
her with one of the medicines mentioned above. If the woman's hus-
band has not had children for a long time, the future mother then en-
joys much esteem; she receives gifts, and her husband pays a great
deal of attention to her.

843 Throughout her pregnancy the woman continues to live with her husband's other wives.

There are many prohibitions:

First of all, there is the prohibition on sexual intercourse after the pregnancy is certain so that the child will not be born covered with sperms and have a cold all his life.

The future mother may not eat decayed things for fear that the child will be born covered with black spots or with sores.

If the pregnant woman looks into the hollow of a tree, the child will be born with crossed eyes; she must not strike the death blow to an animal, for the child will have convulsions like those of the animal in agony. She may not step over a grave, or the child will have gaps in its skull, its bones will not knit, and it will die. She may not eat bananas or the child will have its head covered with scabs, she may not eat land turtle, or the child will always stay thin; it will also be thin if its mother has gone near a chameleon during her pregnancy. Neither may she step over the mvun or her child will be born with a swollen abdomen and die, just as it will die with a swollen abdomen after birth if its mother has eaten an animal, killed the previous day, which has a swollen belly. [81]

The pregnant woman who goes up to a door may not speak from the threshold but must open the door and speak from inside; if she does not do so, at the time of delivery the child will come out and then go back into the womb of the mother, causing her unbearable pain.

A woman knows whether she will bring a boy or a girl into the world, if she has noticed whether the nsue a mon has gone right or left in her womb: it will be a boy if it goes to the right, or a girl if it goes to the left.

844 Confinement (ekurele mir, literally "wrinkling the eyes"). The confinement takes place in the hut where the woman lives; it takes place nowhere else except by accident, for example, if the child comes into the world sooner than expected, during work in the fields or in the forest.

A circle of dry banana leaves is arranged on the ground in the hut. The woman giving birth is seated on it, legs spread, and held from behind by an especially strong woman. In front of her stands another woman to whom is given the name of mbyale, who waits for the child

844 and helps with its birth. It sometimes happens that the child presents only its head and that the rest has difficulty in following. One of the women present goes to ask the husband if, during the pregnancy of his wife, he has nailed anything or fastened it with vines, as it could be this that is holding the child back. In this case the husband must un-nail or detach something; similarly, if he has built a hut, he must remove some bark from the wall of any hut in order to facilitate the birth of the child.

845
824 If the delivery is especially difficult, a man leads a young boy to a wild mango tree (andok), takes him by the feet, and makes him scratch the bark of the tree with a machete, while holding him with his head down. As he scratches, the boy collects pieces of bark in a plate. These pieces, taken back to the village, are used to prepare an infusion which the patient drinks. In case this remedy fails another is made: an infusion of a chopped herb (eyele nzum) is poured into the mouth of the woman in labor by a child perched on the roof of the hut; just above the woman the child has pierced a hole, into which the infusion flows through a hollow banana stalk. When neither of these two medicines has worked, there is a last one which is used in an unusual way, but which, our informants say, is always crowned with success. The invalid eats a paste made of mashed pumpkin, an herb (manden makwe), and a small snail (nson akwe), cooked with salt in leaves. It is very rare, however, that recourse must be had to any of these three medicines. During the entire period of the confinement, at which only women are allowed to be present, the husband stays outside the door of the hut.

844 Immediately after the delivery, the woman called mbyale takes the child and [82] cuts the cord (dol) about 10 centimeters from the abdomen with a piece of bamboo shaped in the form of a knife. The portion removed (ngoe mon) is buried under a banana tree, whose fruit is reserved strictly for men. Then the spot where the delivery took place is cleared of the leaves and washed; at the same time the child is bathed in cold water and laid on a fresh banana leaf. It must spend one night before taking the breast for the first time, and until then nothing is given it to drink.

The placenta (kum) is removed and wrapped in banana leaves in a package which is hidden in the brush. The young mother must not

844 see it, and if she sees it she will have no more children. The mother is then washed with very hot water in which pimento has been steeped; after this her abdomen is bound with a belt of bark (ewag) which she keeps on for several days.

846 After the birth of her child, a young mother is known by the name of nzinze, which she keeps until she has the right to resume relations with her husband. She has a special bed in the hut, on which a [844] menstruating woman may neither sit nor lie so as not to give scabies to the mother and the newborn. The young mother rests for about three months, during which she does no work and bathes every day with water as hot as she can stand, the lumbar region especially being [751] bathed. Moreover, after every bath she is smeared with red paste (ba) to prevent scabies.

Recovery from childbirth is marked by a celebration (okula mon). The first time she goes out, the woman carries a package of ba, a piece of which she places on every tree stump she meets on her way, to mark her path. On her return she prepares a large quantity of food she has brought back. The husband invites the men of his tribe, and the wife invites the women of her husband's tribe. When the food is ready, it is taken to the men in the watchers' hut, where the child is also taken. The women eat in the hut.

846 To improve the quality of her milk, the young mother drinks progressively, if necessary, three medicines:

- 827 (1) An infusion of aseh roots.
751 (2) A milky-looking infusion of pieces of tubers of a plant with a thorny stem (ekon bökun).
(3) Latex from a rubber plant.

761 It may be that the child dies at birth. Three causes for this are recognized:

789 An evur has eaten the child. To prevent this from being repeated and so that the woman will in the future bring living children into the world, she resorts to the practitioner. He goes into the forest armed [83] with a machete and a basket. He gathers the bark of an ovan, and also brush and vines that grow under this tree. On his return to the village he divides his collection into two parts. One part, mixed with water, is put in a large rectangular container of banana leaves called etok, which has been filled with the blood of a domestic animal sacrificed for the welfare of the woman. She then immerses herself

76/ in the etok and stays there for a certain length of time. While she is
789 in this bath, she eats a soup made of the rest of the bark gathered by
the practitioner, together with a pumpkin, a piece of the heart, liver,
and some blood of the sacrificial animal, all cooked in a pot. This
remedy is intended to satisfy the evur and prevent it from eating the
blood of the woman or of the child which she may carry in her womb
in the future.

76/ The death of the child may also arise from an akaga given to the
mother, which predicted that one of her children would not live.

76/ Finally, if there is neither evur nor akaga, this mishap is believed
784 to be caused by the violation of a prohibition or, more likely, by
837 adultery committed by the woman during her pregnancy. To make
her denounce her accomplice, she is beaten until she has named him.
This man must then pay to the husband an indemnity equal to half the
dowry which he spent to get his wife, an indemnity which represents
the price of the adultery and the price of the child's corpse. The
woman is subjected from then on to the prohibition of awos until the
the birth of her next child.

854 The child (mon). Until it talks, the child is called nkañele. We
We have seen that after its birth it is washed in cold water and not fed
until the following morning. The breast is first given it by another
woman rather than by the mother, whose milk is not good at first.

At the age of eight days, the child is smeared with ba. If the cord
dries up by itself without trouble, it is enough to moisten it with saliva.

845 Anomalies such as the birth of an albino or of twins are considered
[143] normal. The natives have stated that albinos are reproduced in the
same family at an interval of three generations. As to twins, they are
[557] forbidden later on to take part in the ngwel. If the twins are boys,
the first is called Nzugo, the second Dzima; if they are girls, they
are given the names respectively of Beia and Nzua.

55/ A name is not given a child until several months after birth, when
one is almost certain that it will live. A child receives several names.
The father chooses the first name from among his ancestors. For ex-
ample, a boy will be called Osene from the name of a paternal ancestor,
to this name of Osene has been added the name of his father Ekomi,
and so the child is called Osene Ekomi; but he also has a sort of first
name chosen by the parents, which in the present case is [84] Andzang.
The complete name thus is Andzang Osene Ekomi. The mother's

55/ family has given him a second name, Ekure Nzork (elephant hide), which corresponds to the wish made by the grandparents that their grandson may be as tough as elephant hide. Still other names may be given by other relatives, each of these corresponding to an affectionate feeling or a wish for the child. Andzang [misprinted Andang in original] has a third name given by the wife of one of his uncles, Nzul Weya (young civet), that is to say "as handsome as a civet,"
 801 civet skin formerly having been worn as an ornament by young Pahouin
 832 wanting to make female conquests.

When a man has had several children who have died at an early age, in order that the newborn may not die like the others he gives him the name of an animal: Ngi (gorilla), Waga (chimpanzee), Nze (panther), Mvina (antelope), etc...

Sometimes the child receives a name referring to an incident of his birth. A child may be called: Nefan (from afan, the forest), if he is born in the forest; Bemvan (from mvan, rain), if he was born in the rain or on a rainy day; or Bitejé (from eteg, mourning), if he was born after the death of his father, during his mother's mourning, etc...

[m] Actually in all the N'Djolé region children are given a Christian name in addition to their native names, even if neither the parents nor the child have any contact with the missions. It is also quite usual to see children bearing European proper names, names which were given them because the parents thought them pretty. Similarly, one meets children called Captain, Major, Militiaman, etc... , and always the parents give as reason for their choice that the name taken for the child is beautiful.

85/ The child belongs to its father and cannot be dependent on the mother unless she has been repudiated and the father has waived his claim to reimbursement.

853 Nursing continues until eighteen months or two years, but at about the age of six months, in addition to the breast, the child gets the same food as its parents except for fish, meat, and salt, which are forbidden him.

855 The physical care given the child is reduced to the minimum: he lives naked until the age of about ten years and is bathed every day. When he can walk, he is put on his own and plays with the other children of the village, boys and girls together. While he is still rather

855 weak, the mother takes him with her to the fields or on her other trips. She carries him either on her hip by means of a belt of antelope hide, or on her back with a rope of vines on which the child sits, as long as he is small. After he can hold on by himself, he is carried [85] on the hip, clutching the neck of the person who is carrying him. One sees children of some ten years old being carried.

857 As soon as the child is old enough to eat like adults, and talks
868 and counts properly, he starts accompanying his parents to the fields and to fishing; he learns to swim, paddle, dance, and play the tomtom and various musical instruments. The little girls learn to cultivate a small piece of farm land which is given them by their mothers.

Games. The numerous games are almost all common to both sexes. Little boys and girls play together in the village, but the boys have three games in which girls never take part:

[411] Nge ou ye. This game consists of rolling on the path at the end of the village, before a lineup of young boys, a cylinder of soft wood which they must hit by throwing a sharp spear. This is training for throwing the assagai.

[411] Binra, game of the bow. This is a hunt of rats and lizards by young boys with small bows made of mvibema wood and strung with a vine; the arrows are of bamboo with their tips smeared with pimento. It is to be noted that although children play with the bow, adults do not have this weapon and only the crossbow is found.

857 Mbeñ, musical bow: This is a kind of guessing game. The one who has the instrument thinks about something; another child has to guess it, and therefore he asks: "Nzam e biale ebe, fore dza ke yo, eñi for dza lige esi, matsi eve?" (Nzam made two of them, one goes up, the other stays on the ground, where am I fastened?), and asks if it concerns the one above or the one below. If he has guessed right, a deep tone of the bow answers him; if he is mistaken it is a shrill sound. If, for example, he happens to choose the one below, the game continues with the question "me sal e Nzam esi fore dza ke osui, eñi for dza lige kinige, matsi eve?" (I cut the lower Nzam in two, one goes to the river, the other stays on land, where am I fastened?), and the game goes on, dividing the guessed part in two until the object thought of is discovered.

The following are some mixed games:

Meboğ. The children are seated in line, legs apart, except for two of them, who remain standing. One of these two hides an object among

857 the legs of the others and the second must find it. They take turns, and the game may continue for a considerable time.

Sima bebene is played by moonlight. The children are seated closely packed, one beside the other, and each chooses the name of a common object to represent him. Two of the children remain standing; one of them goes away and the other stays near his comrades. He is sima bebene. The one who is at a distance calls "sima bebene!" and the other answers "o ooo!" The first then calls "a to we be nza ben za" (who are those over there?), to which sima bebene [86] answers by reciting the names adopted by each. Then the child who is at a distance names the objects necessary for ordinary life. For example, he will say, "eto e n̄zag me kwe en̄o" (may the loincloth come to find me here), and the child who has taken the name of loincloth gets up and goes, and so the game goes on. The children who remain seated, not having been called, are the objects of the others' derision, because they did not know how to choose things that are necessary for ordinary life.

Kunege, this is a kind of leapfrog. The children are placed in line, bent over, legs stiff, hands on the ground. The last walks on the backs of the others and bends over at the other end of the line, which moves in this way.

Ngal ngüi (the sow). Two of the strongest children hold each other by the hands, arms extended. The one who represents ngal ngüi is held by all the others in a line. The line, stooping, passes under the extended arms, singing, "ngal ngüi eyele eye a a a... ngal ngüi." The last in line is caught by those who hold each others' hands and goes to one side. This goes on until ngal ngüi is left alone. Then they all form two rows and try to catch him, singing "me lege ne nkuma nkum ke mon" (I have stayed like a dry tree trunk without child).

Nda mebeme (the bound hut). The children sit on the ground with legs crossed over the abdomen of the one in front, holding him by the shoulders. The line thus formed leans alternately to the right and to the left and moves forward on the buttocks, singing "nda mebeme eyele ye... nda mebeme."

Endele is played at night. The children are gathered in the village square, and one of them is chosen to be endele. The others give him

857 something to do near the village, and when he has gone they call to him, "endele o o o...", and he answers, "o yo o o o mur e mur a ne e nzine bekun nlu si mebo yo mura kue a ba a muge nie a nu" (there is a big man on the road, a phantom with his head down and his feet up and a red mouth). Endele keeps answering until he has done what was asked of him. Usually he comes back before this from fear of the phantom of which he speaks and which he thinks he sees.

882 Puberty, Adolescence. Puberty occasions no ceremony, but from then on the child has the right to eat the take of his hunting and fishing, which was formerly forbidden him. This prohibition is called eki wo.

304 Circumcision is done either before or after puberty. It is an operation which is usually performed for many children at a time, and takes place in the early morning. The operator (nkir) comes to the village without the children's being told, and the fathers who wish their sons circumcised watch them so they do not run away. The children are led behind a hut where pieces of red wood have been prepared. [87] A hole is made in the ground, and the pieces of red wood are put in it and set on fire. Each child sits on the stump of a banana tree. The operator uses a well-sharpened razor. Before the operation he fills his mouth with seeds of wild pimento which he chews. He takes the foreskin of the child in his left hand, pulls it, makes a mark on it with his nail at the place where he will cut. The father of the child sees whether the cut piece will be of the desired size, and if he agrees the operator slices the foreskin with one stroke of the razor and spits the pimento, which he has in his mouth, onto the wound. Then he says, "fam e ne e saga e saga sag mi sag nkli," an obscene expression which it is impossible to translate here. The circumcised child goes and sits near the fire of red wood. The foreskin is placed on top of a banana tree, whose fruit is cooked and eaten by men only. The circumcision is an occasion for rejoicing; it is done so that the children will not die and also to remove the foreskin which keeps a man from being strong.

304 681 Female circumcision is never practiced any more. It was formerly done to married women of notoriously bad conduct in order to punish them. The woman was fastened to two stakes in the village square. The clitoris was removed by the man who did the circumcising and was then attached by a thread and put around the neck of the woman, who had to keep it that way for several days to her great shame. The

344/681 circumcision was public, and the woman to whom it was done under-
went the gibes and insults of all the inhabitants.

883 The life of the young people is the same as that of the adults. The
836 virginity of a woman is considered unimportant and the Fan have
818 sexual relations from the time they are capable of cohabitation. When
a young girl has a child, it belongs to her parents, from whom the
child acquires wealth; there is no search for the father and the young
girl keeps all the respect which she enjoyed. Young girls are free to
give themselves to whomever they please. This very broad morality,
[582] however, has one important qualification in that there are, so to speak,
no young girls, the little girls having been married off by their parents
very early, sometimes even before their birth.

582 Marriage (aluḡ). Men rarely marry before the age of twenty years,
and usually later, because they do not have the means to pay the dowry
for taking a wife.

582 Exogamy is always practiced because marriage between people of
835 the same tribe is sterile. Marriage between cousins is forbidden up to
the third generation and in general, marriage is forbidden between
persons linked by any kind of kinship; in this case there is also pro-
[684] hibition of sexual relations. No penalty is prescribed for infraction,
but the guilty ones will fall ill and their children, if they have any,
will not live.

582 Occasionally there are instances when marriage between relatives
783 is authorized, but only after the practitioner has removed the pro-
835 hibition by the process [88] called abvule minsem. The practitioner
goes to find some termite earth (ngurege), a plant (mekaga), and a
vine (nyola dzik); the plant and vine are folded and placed in an etok
[145] (a container of banana leaves) full of water. The termite earth is
placed on a nzum (see the description in the section on conception) and
the etok is placed underneath. The two kinsmen who want to marry
also stand underneath it, while the practitioner climbs onto the nzum,
dips the leaves in the etok, and says, "nseme ose mi waga bo e wo ma
va yūi" (I remove every prohibition that you have made). He hits the
termite earth with the leaves and then takes the etok and pours the
contents onto the heads of the two people from whom he is removing
the prohibition. With the remainder, the man and woman each takes
a washing.

583 A man who has not enough dowry but who finds a young girl eager
to marry him may take her away in the night; when the parents come

583 to look for her, he gives them what he has in the way of money and goods, and the parents have to consent to the marriage by accepting this first payment. This practice is called abom.

584 This practice is exceptional, and the marriage proposal is generally made in a more conventional way. A man, having learned that there is a free woman in a neighboring tribe, a young girl or a repudiated wife, goes to the woman's parents and asks to see her. She comes into the hut, sits down, and allows herself to be looked at. She does not speak if she has never been married, but she speaks if she is used to men; then she goes out after about an hour. Her brothers ask her opinion of the suitor and take the answer to the latter, who gives his opinion of the woman he has seen. This visit is called dzāga. If both agree to marry, they spend the night together; the man may leave in the morning without saying anything if the woman has not suited him and he does not wish to marry her. If it is the woman who is not satisfied, she asks her brothers to tell the suitor not to come back. In case of agreement, the suitor goes back several times for several days. The father of the woman fixes the amount of the dowry, and the suitor has to accept it.

586 If a married woman, not wishing to stay with her husband, goes off with another man, the latter pays the woman's parents the amount of the dowry which was paid by the former husband. This practice is fairly recent. In earlier times the former husband received the dowry of his successor directly or, if he refused it, it was a case of war unless another woman was given him in exchange.

583 Marriage is not considered final until the dowry has been paid in full by the husband. The amount is variable, currently about 1,500 or 2,000 francs, in money or in various goods. The woman leaves her tribe and goes to live with her husband. Her arrival at her new village is marked by celebrations. [89] She is accompanied by women who cry out "e e ke o o o ko"; these cries are called mekogo. The husband's mother recites to her the genealogy of her son; then the bride goes into her husband's hut where the women of her husband's family bring her food. She is confined here for a week, and this is the "good welcome to the bride," eyale mbom.

585 Two days after the arrival of the bride, there are songs and dances performed by women only: these are the bya bi mbom. The men play the tomtom and are spectators. This takes place near the husband's hut.

585 The day on which the woman is to come out of the hut, she is bathed
535 and anointed with an oil (mbon nzūi) and is seated on a stool placed in
the middle of the village square. Other women sing and dance around
her and give her a new name to represent a wish she has made.

There is no religious ceremony.

583 There also used to be a marriage by exchange of wives (mvole
bunanga). With the mere consent of the women concerned, two men
could exchange their wives. The parents of the wives did not interfere
except to verify the amounts of the dowries and to make sure that the
husband of the wife with the lesser dowry had fully paid the difference
to the other.

593 The relations between married couples are simple: the man must
562 lodge his wife and clear the brush from the site where she will make
her plantings; on the other hand, the wife owes absolute fidelity and
obedience to her husband, who has the right to beat her. The woman
has no authority in the household; she is hardly more respected than
[452] a domestic animal; she owns in her own right only the cooking utensils
and the tools for planting and fishing, and does not have the right to own
[834] animals. Prohibition of sexual relations is rigidly observed during
pregnancy, during lactation, and in the night preceding departure for
the hunt, work at the forge, and various [other] tasks. If the pro-
hibition were not observed, these tasks would be unsuccessful.

595 Polygamy is the present custom among the Fan. The first wife
has authority over the others, who must obey her. She receives the
largest share of everything and assigns household chores and field work.
The husband sleeps with each of his wives for three days.

684 In adultery, only the wife is punished. She is beaten and her ac-
837 complice pays an indemnity to her husband. This indemnity amounts
to a quarter of the dowry. The wife confesses her adultery only when
forced to by a series of corporal punishments which range from blows
to being tied to a tree full of ants (akokum).

586 Repudiation is accomplished without difficulty: the man sends back
his wife and the dowry is repaid him. The causes for repudiation are
repeated adultery, the death of a child as a result of adultery, laziness,
practice of fetishism, and excessive surveillance of the husband; sterility
is not a reason for [90] repudiation. The children stay with the husband,
and the woman, once repudiated, may remarry.

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769 When a man dies and one of his relatives marries his wives, there is no additional payment of dowry. When a man loses his wife, the dowry is repaid fully, or in part, by the relatives of the deceased wife if she has left no children. If there are children, the widower makes no claim to the dowry.

765 The widow cuts her hair. After the death of the husband, the wife is made to confess the names of her lovers in order to make them give payments which will finance the celebrations at the end of mourning. She must weep for one whole day and one whole night; she may do nothing without the permission of her husband's heir; and for a month she stays dirty, dressed in an old loincloth. At the end of this time there are celebrations of the end of mourning which last several days. The widow sits for a whole night in the village square, and the husband's relatives throw her water and pimento. The following morning she jumps four times over a fire of dry banana leaves. While she is jumping, men hit her for the anguish which she has caused her husband to endure. After that she receives a new loincloth from her family and then, before beginning the dances, if she has not accepted remarriage to her husband's heir, she chooses a new husband from among the assembled men of the dead man's family.

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839 Neither homosexuality nor bestiality have ever been recorded, to our knowledge, among the Fan.

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840 Prostitution does not exist.

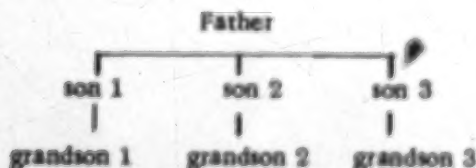
833 Impotence (eyel), if it is congenital, is attributed to the mother's having accidentally caused milk to flow onto the penis of her son while nursing him. If it occurs later, it is said to be from the abuse of coitus and it is believed that there is no more sperm in the impotent person.

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889 Family Group. The family (nda ebur) consists of the man, his wives, his children, and his brothers. It usually includes several homes and constitutes a village in itself. The authority belongs to the father, and it is he who commands because of his being the most respected. He has absolute power, but also incurs certain duties, the most important of which is to find money or goods as dowry for the women whom his sons wish to marry. These dowries are usually obtained through payments made by the girls' husbands. The most complete mutual aid is obligatory among all members of the family, in all circumstances. When the parents have become too old to continue exercising their authority, they live with the family of their oldest son

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[897] where they enjoy great esteem and are consulted every time on decisions concerning all the family, [91] such as the marriage of a child, because this is a matter of alliance with another tribe, or such as moving the village. Young people of a poor family who get themselves adopted may be incorporated into the family and assimilated among its children. The adopted son (ntob) gets a wife from the head of the family which has taken him in. This wife, however, is only loaned to him, and the children whom he may have do not belong to him and are regarded as being of the adopter's family whose name they receive.

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769 Each family has a fetish all its own, which is handed down through the oldest sons. It is often a reed (ayan) which is planted behind the huts of the village where the family lives, by a practitioner in the course of an important ceremony. The practitioner digs a hole, puts into it the bones of a member of the family killed by the bivur, spits onto it some wild pepper that he has chewed, and, before planting the reed, says, "ke nzue, ke wone, me nga non we bemvama e dzam ese dzah bor yüi, o ke sile e yenege" (without stealing or hiding myself I have taken from my ancestors, so that everything which will be asked of you by this family shall happen). The reed must be treasured and constantly kept clear of weeds which might grow around it. A fowl is sacrificed to this reed by the head of the family every time he wishes to undertake an important matter, and when the village moves the plant is taken along with the bones and replanted.

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614 **Social Life.** Pahouin society is limited to a group of families which make up the tribe. The latter originates from a single family, the sons of which have left to establish other families in their turn. The separation occurs almost constantly in the third generation. The formation of a tribe may be diagrammed thus:



Grandson 1 establishes a family which keeps the name of the founder; grandson 2, a family which will take the name of this grandson; and

613 the same for the third grandson. The group of the sons' three families
614 constitutes what is called etúna or aval. The tribe (ayoh) gives its
name to all the families which have been established since its founder.

614 Social relations are rare with foreign tribes, the tribe forming a
• 609 homogeneous whole where the stranger is received only with reserve
518 and when he shows goods which prove that his visit has no other aim
but to come and look for a woman to marry. The [92] tribes are
often hostile to one another, and while they no longer can make war,
this hostility is still demonstrated by an atmosphere of haggling which
always forces the weakest to give way. Several tribes have thus had to
leave the N'Djolé region to settle farther downstream on the Ogooué
because they could no longer live beside their neighbors.

514 On the other hand, visits among members of one tribe are frequent,
presents are exchanged, and wives are bought.

761 Death (awu). Death is regarded as a change of village. After his
715 death, a person has become an inhabitant of the big village created
by Nzame beyond the earth. There he will find the members of his
family who already live there, and therefore he follows a very wide
trail which leads him to the bank of the river Endam where his rela-
tives who died before him come to await him. It may be that the cross-
ing of the river is not immediate, and the dead man may have to stay
for several days on the bank, which happens especially to people of whom
the bivur have made human victims.

763 The dying person (edzegela) is attended by women who, when death
has occurred, announce it on coming out of the hut, where all the in-
habitants of the village then assemble. The corpse is taken from its
bed and laid on the ground on mats; it is washed, rubbed with oil, and
clothed in a white loincloth, then rolled in the mats and in pieces of
bark, and tied. It stays this way in the hut until the grave is dug.

764 Funeral ceremonies immediately follow death. The wrapped body is
carried by two men to the place of burial. The inhabitants of the vil-
lage follow, one behind the other, and are present at the interment,
which is done with a vine holding the body so that it does not fall
suddenly to the bottom of the hole dug to receive it. The grave is
oriented east-west, or is dug parallel to the course of the river which
flows by the village, the head of the dead being placed upstream or
to the east, the feet downstream or toward the west, so that the dead
will lie in the direction of the river Endam. Before the grave is filled,

764 there are placed in it the arms or some everyday objects of the deceased. Then everyone goes back to the village, the women crying. The close relatives of the deceased go into mourning, which is much stricter for a woman than for a man; we have already seen what comprises the mourning of a widow. As for the widower, after having stayed for two or three days in a state of prostration, often simulated, he continues to look after his work as usual, remaining meanwhile under the obligation to stay dirty until the celebrations at the end of mourning.

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715 The autopsy of the corpse to find the evur is done at the edge of the grave, after the women have been sent away. The package containing [93] the corpse is undone and the practitioner operates with a large knife made especially for this purpose. He has previously painted his face half black, half red so that the deceased will not recognize him and cannot come from his abode in the village of Nzame to avenge himself for the mutilation he is undergoing. When the operation is finished, the corpse is sewed up, re-wrapped, and placed normally in the grave.

764 There is no cemetery, and the dead are buried a short distance from the village, almost behind the huts. Sometimes when a person is thought to have died from having been eaten by the bivur, in order that the grave may not be violated for the purpose of removing a piece of the corpse, it is buried in the very hut of the head of the family.

715 The life of the dead in the village of Nzame is identical with that which they had at home; they do the same work, have the same entertainments, marry, procreate, always stay young, and also have the power to do whatever they wish; it is enough for them to express a wish for it to be granted.

715 The dead sometimes leave their abode to return to the earth, perhaps in the form of phantoms with long hair to frighten the living, meeting a phantom being fatal, or perhaps in the shape of animals in order to avenge themselves. Some may change themselves into an elephant and ravage the fields of their enemies; others change into a panther and kill all the livestock and poultry and sometimes even the inhabitants of the village where they were unhappy in life. When they wish to be beneficent, they appear in the dreams of their relatives and friends and give them wise advice.

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825 Sometimes a dead person who was not sufficiently mourned has on account of this been unable to find the route to the river Endam, and he comes back in the shape of a black antelope to get himself killed so as to die a second time and be sure to arrive at the village of the dead.

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829 Europeans, on account of their pale look, their long, smooth hair, and above all because of the material goods they have brought, are still regarded as dead Pahouin who have returned to their country, and the fear of the children who rush to hide from the sight of a white man in many villages is due to the legends told by the old people who thus describe us.

3: Trézenem
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Fang FH9

/Information on the social unit Trézenem calls the "tribe" has been placed
in Category 614 Sibs. --Analyst/